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A STATUE OF BUDDHA AT KALAWEYA.

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PEEPS AT MANY LANDS

CEYLON

BY

ALFRED CLARK

SECOND EDITION

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IN COLOUR
BY
ALLAN STEWART AND OTHERS

MACMILLAN & CO., LTD.
BOMBAY, CALCUTTA, MADRAS
LONDON: A. & C. BLACK, LTD., SOHO SQUARE
1928

First published in 1910 *with twelve illustrations in colour.*
Reprinted 1920 *with eight illustrations.*
Second edition, 1928.

Printed in Great Britain

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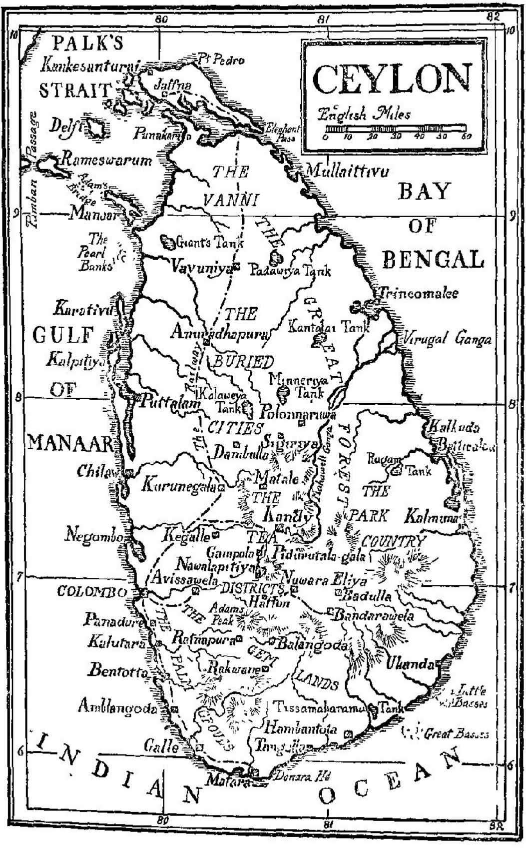


SKETCH-MAP OF CEYLON.

CEYLON

CHAPTER I

THE ISLAND

Ceylon is a pear-shaped island, a little smaller than Ireland, in the Indian Ocean, between six and ten degrees north of the Equator. From its position with reference to the mainland, it has been called by Eastern poets "the Pearl-Drop on the Brow of India."

Though separated from the continent only by the shallow Palk's Strait, some thirty miles wide, Ceylon differs so much from India in its zoology and botany that it is evident it has been an island for countless ages. For instance, there are no tigers, cheetahs, bisons, hyenas, wolves, or antelopes there, though these wild animals are common in India. The elephants of Ceylon are of a different breed, being tuskless, and there are a number of birds, reptiles, and plants peculiar to the island.

The greater part of Ceylon consists of forest-

covered plains, interspersed with rocky hills. The forest is so dense and unbroken that it is said a flock of monkeys might start from Point Pedro, the most northern point of the island, and travel to Dondra Head, at its southern extremity, some three hundred miles, without touching the ground once! In the south central part is a mountainous region, covering about one quarter of the whole area of Ceylon. More than one hundred and sixty peaks, from three thousand to over eight thousand feet high, raise their tree-clad heads over the vast plateau. Among them is the world-famous Adam's Peak. Most of the rivers take their rise among the mountains, and after foaming through the rocky ravines, flow through bamboo-bordered banks into the sea all round the island. There are many magnificent waterfalls, either walls or waving curtains of white water, or roaring many-leap cataracts. There are no natural lakes, but along the coasts on the east and west are extensive salt-water lagoons or backwaters. On the north-west are a number of small islands, the principal of which is Manaar, from the northern end of which commences the string of islets and sand-banks forming Adam's Bridge.

The heat in Ceylon is less oppressive than in India. The island has three distinct climates—the hot and dry, in the north and east; the hot and moist, in the west and south; and the cold and moist,

in the central parts of it. There is no summer, winter, spring, nor autumn—or, rather, it is always summer, the temperature never varying much more than ten degrees throughout the year. There are, however, two annual seasons, called "monsoons." For one half of the year the wind blows almost constantly from the south-west, and for the other half from the north-east. The "break of the monsoon" is always attended by violent atmospheric disturbances.

For some days before the change of the wind it is oppressively hot and still, then great masses of black cloud appear, and the wind begins to blow in gusts, gradually growing in strength, till, with a mighty roar, the storm bursts over the land in deluges of rain. In a few hours hundreds of trees are blown down or dismembered, scores of huts are unroofed, every tank is overflowing, and every river a rushing torrent. The failure of the monsoon means loss of crops, and famine to the people.

Sunsets, especially during the monsoons, are often very magnificent, the whole western sky being a blaze of gorgeous colours. One curious phenomenon often seen is called "Buddha's Rays," great shafts of coloured light streaming fanwise upwards into the blue sky from the point on the horizon where the sun has just sunk. Moonlight is especially brilliant in Ceylon, owing to the clearness of the air.

The tides are scarcely perceptible, but strong currents sweep round the south coasts for six months in a westerly direction, and for a similar period in an opposite direction. So strong are they that a story is told of a sailing-ship, in the old days, arriving during the monsoon opposite Galle after a long voyage, but, missing the tack for the harbour entrance, being caught in the current and disappearing for three weeks, during which time it crossed the Equator twice in its efforts to beat back against wind and current!

Ceylon has been celebrated from time immemorial for its pearls, its precious stones, its spices, especially cinnamon, its elephants, and its natural beauty. It is now famous for its palms, but these were introduced only within historical times.

CHAPTER II

IN DAYS GONE BY

THE earliest accounts of Ceylon are purely legendary. According to Hindu mythology, the island, then called Lanka, was, æons ago, under the sway of Rávana, a demon-king, whose power was so great that he became the terror of the worlds. The gods,

living in their celestial abodes on the sacred mountain Máhá Merú, became alarmed. Rávana, undismayed by their hostility, seized Síta, the beautiful wife of Ráma, one of the manifestations of the god Vishnu, and carried her off to his palace among the mountains. Ráma collected a vast army to recover his wife, and it crossed over to the island by a causeway built by his ally, Hanúman, the monkey-god, who piled mountains in the sea from shore to shore, the chain of rocks and sand now called Adam's Bridge. A terrific war followed. Rávana was slain and Síta rescued. The whole story is a nightmare of roaring demons, giants, bestial monsters and enchanters, wallowing in maelstroms of blood.

It is not known who were the original inhabitants of the island; their very name has been forgotten, the few hundred people still living, and believed to be their descendants, being spoken of merely as the Veddahs, or hunters. They are referred to by ancient writers either as Yakkhos (demons) or as Nágas (snakes), probably on account of their cruel and treacherous dispositions. All that is related of them is that the Indian, Persian, Arab, and even Egyptian and Greek merchants who visited the island, creeping along the coasts in their galleys, traded with them in a curious way. The people of the country never showed themselves, but placed on the shore during the night the products

of their forests and fields, with well-understood signs to intimate what they wanted in exchange. Neither sellers nor buyers ever saw each other in this wonderful system of barter!

The history of Ceylon, though, of course, much mixed with monstrous exaggeration and ridiculous fables, is given in the "Máhâwanso," a metrical chronicle in the ancient Páli language. It contains a dynastic account of the island for twenty-three centuries, and its statements have in many instances been verified by monuments, rock inscriptions and coins discovered.

In the year 543 B.C., about two hundred years after the founding of Rome, Wijáyo, the outlawed son of a petty Rajah in the Valley of the Ganges, collected a band of desperadoes, and made a descent on the island. In order to gain a footing, he married the daughter of one of the aboriginal chiefs, but repudiated her as soon as he had established himself firmly. He introduced the Hindu religion, but it is probable that it did not replace that of the aborigines, which was no doubt a debased form of Nature-worship.

He was followed by one hundred and sixty-five Kings and Queens, only a few of whom distinguished themselves in any way. It took more than two hundred years to reduce the aboriginal inhabitants to subjection, and for many centuries afterwards the

A STREET SCENE IN THE PETTAH, COLOMBO. *Page 31.*

Kings of Ceylon were constantly engaged in repelling invasions of Tamil hordes from South India. Five times were they forced by their enemies to change their capital, and several times foreign usurpers sat on the throne.

At length, in 307 B.C. a great King arose, whose native name meant "Beloved of the Holy Ones." He it was who began the building of the great edifices, second only in size and magnificence to those of ancient Egypt, the ruins of which still exist. After him, from time to time other great Kings carried on this work.

In the course of time the country was covered with tanks, or artificial reservoirs, for irrigating the great stretches of paddy-fields. They were formed by throwing up great embankments across the embouchures of valleys, and providing them with spill-waters and sluices of cut stone. Some of these were of immense size, the largest being twenty miles in circuit, and with a bund, or embankment, twelve miles long. Water was brought to them from the distant hills by artificial rivers, and they were linked together by canals, which carried the overflow of each to its neighbour at a lower level. All these were constructed by the forced labour of many thousands of people, under the guidance of Brahmin engineers.

In addition to these gigantic works of utility, many

great *dâgobas*, or relic-shrines, were erected. These were bell-shaped miniature hills, built generally of brick, with ornamental stone bases, and surmounted by a terminal in the form of a cube supporting a pointed spire. The largest of these, still in existence, is loftier than the dome of St. Paul's! Beautiful *wihâras*, or temples, and vast *pânsalas*, or monasteries, mostly of cut stone, were also built, and cave shrines excavated.

These immense and beautiful buildings were erected in honour of a great teacher named Buddha, born 624 B.C., and in furtherance of his doctrines. His religion, if it may be so called, was introduced into Ceylon about 393 B.C., and became the national faith.

Some of the Kings distinguished themselves by their piety, even going so far as to resign their sovereignty from time to time for a few days in favour of the high-priests. They frequently clothed all the priesthood throughout the island, giving three robes to each; bestowed numberless lamps on the temples; maintained colleges of teachers; distributed vast quantities of rice in time of famine; and founded hospitals for the infirm.

One King is said to have been so pious and so conscientious that, recollecting that he had, when a boy, eaten a chilli without offering a portion of it to a priest, he imposed on himself, as a punishment

for his crime, the building of a great *dágoba*, the Miriswettiya, which stands to this day!

Another King, it is related, so pleased the celestial powers by his virtues that they caused rain to fall only at night and at regular intervals during his reign, to the great content and convenience of the people!

A goodly number of these royal personages were, however, of very different character. The most wicked of them was probably Anúla the Infamous, a Queen whose life was spent in murder and in the indulgence of her passions.

The most famous of the Kings was Dutugemunu, who assumed the *chatta*, or canopy of dominion, in 161 B.C. At that time all the northern parts of the island were under the rule of Elála, a brave and chivalrous Tamil chief. The young King collected an army, and led it, mounted on his war-elephant, against the usurper, whom he eventually defeated and slew.

In the twelfth century another great King not only repelled an invasion of Tamils from India, but carried the war into their own country. He also sent an army against the King of Cambodia, in the Far East, and made that distant land tributary to him.

After this period, however, owing to the constant wars, the kingdom broke up. When a band of Portuguese adventurers came to the island in 1505, in their bluff-bowed, high-sterned caravels, they

found it divided under seven separate rulers. One of these was the descendant of the ancient Kings, and held his court at Kandy, among the mountains, while the northern and eastern parts were in the permanent occupation of the Tamils.

The Portuguese conquered the maritime districts of the island, and for one hundred and fifty years maintained a military occupation of the territory won. An army of Roman Catholic priests came with them, who made thousands of converts.

The Dutch, the great rivals of the Portuguese in the East, finally expelled them from the island in 1656. They, too, made great efforts to convert the natives to their ideas of Christianity, but without much permanent success. Trade was, however, the principal object of both nations, and they practically enslaved their native subjects to that end. Hundreds of elephants were caught annually and sold to Indian potentates. Pearl-fisheries were held frequently, yielding great revenues. The cultivation of cinnamon was made a monopoly, and was protected by stringent laws. The peeling, selling, or export of a single stick of the spice, or even wilful injury to a plant, was punished by death. The Portuguese did nothing for the material welfare of the country, but the Dutch constructed roads and canals.

In 1797 the territories of the Dutch in Ceylon were wrested from them by the British. Eighteen

years later the King of Kandy, a cruel monster, the descendant of the old Kings of Ceylon, was deposed and exiled to South India. For three hundred years these Kings of Kandy, secure in their mountain capital, the only paths to which led through almost uninhabited forests and were barred by thorn-gates, had defied the power of the Portuguese and Dutch, but in 1815 their misrule came to an end. Ever since then Ceylon has been a Crown Colony, ruled by a Governor, with two Councils to assist him.

No better example of "time's revenge" is to be found in history than the changes Ceylon has seen in the last two thousand years. In the days of the Singhalese Kings the great plains boasted of several large cities, full of magnificent royal and religious edifices; scores of huge reservoirs and thousands of smaller ones, irrigating wide stretches of paddy-fields, which supported an immense population, scattered in villages from sea to sea. The mountains were then covered with impenetrable wild-beast-infested forests, and were supposed to be the abode of *yakkhos*, or demons. Now the low-country, as it is called, is a sparsely populated, forest-clad waste; the palaces and temples are in ruins, and buried in the débris of ages; the embankments of the reservoirs are breached, and their beds are covered with forest. Scarcely any signs remain of the ancient paddy-fields. On the other hand, the once uninhabited mountains teem with

busy life in the towns and villages which have sprung up in the valleys, and on the tea-estates which cover the hillsides. Railways penetrate to every part, roads radiate in all directions, and the wild beasts have practically disappeared.

CHAPTER III

THE PEOPLE

THE population of the whole of Ceylon is a little more than half that of London. It consists mainly of two races, the Singhalese and the Tamils, who are entirely different in appearance, costume, language, religion, and customs. The former, who are by far the more numerous, claim as their ancestors the original conquerors of the island, who followed the outlaw Wijáyo from Northern India, and the latter are the descendants of the adventurers from Southern India who so often made raiding incursions into the island. The Singhalese occupy the south-western and southern parts, and the Tamils the northern and eastern parts.

The inhabitants of the hills, called Kandians, are Singhalese, but are of a different type from their fellow-countrymen in the lowlands, and are superior

to them in many respects. The vast majority of the people in the hills are, however, Tamil coolies, immigrants from South India, and employed on the tea-estates. The centre of the island and the districts round the bases of the hills are inhabited by a miserable jungle people—some Singhalese and some Tamils. In the forests on the eastern side are to be found a few hundred Veddahs, all now left of the ancient aborigines, and doomed to extinction before long, chiefly by intermarriage with Singhalese and Tamils.

In all the towns are to be found numbers of Moormen, so called by the Portuguese. Their forefathers were probably Arab traders, who settled in the country some hundreds of years ago. There are also a number of Malays, whose fathers and grandfathers were brought to the island from the Straits Settlements, as soldiers, in the early days of the British occupation. Descendants of Portuguese and Dutch officials and soldiers who married native wives are numerous. Those with Dutch blood in their veins are usually called Burghers, but prefer to describe themselves as Ceylonese. They are a very superior class ; most of the doctors, lawyers, and subordinate Civil Servants are members of it.

Though the Singhalese derive their name from *singha*, a lion, they are a most unwarlike race. The features, costume, and coiffure of the men in the

coast districts accentuate their effeminate appearance. They wear loin-cloths, called *comboys*, usually white, descending almost to their feet, and looking something like petticoats, and have long hair, often hanging loose over their shoulders, but generally twisted into a knot behind the head, with a round tortoiseshell comb, and sometimes an upright one in addition, stuck into it. The women have a most unbecoming dress, partly copied from the Portuguese, consisting of a tightly wound loin-cloth and a loose jacket with tight sleeves and puffed shoulders.

Most of the Singhalese in the interior support themselves by rice cultivation and coconut growing. It is only within recent years that they have been induced to accept work on the tea or other estates as labourers. In the coast districts they are chiefly traders and artificers, being especially skilful in carpentry and wood-carving.

Their language is not an easy one to acquire, and there are two forms of it, the literary and the colloquial, the former being full of Sanscrit and Páli words. Singhalese is rich in honorifics, it being said that there are eleven different forms in which hosts can dismiss their visitors, according to their rank in relation to their own.

Many of the low-country Singhalese have high-sounding Portuguese names in addition to their village names, such as Don Sebastian Appu Vidah-

nelagé, and they have adopted into their language a good many Portuguese and Dutch words.

The Tamils of the northern and eastern provinces are on the whole a finer and more manly race than the Singhalese. Their skins are of a darker shade of brown, and their costume is more tasteful. The men shave their heads, leaving only a long scalp-lock, which they tie into a knot and wear at the back of the head or over the ear, according as they are married men or bachelors. The dress of the women is often of bright colours.

Rice cultivation is the chief occupation of the Tamils of the country, but great numbers are also employed in growing tobacco, and in utilizing the products of the palmyra palm. Hundreds of them are employed as clerks, not only in Government offices, but by merchants and planters.

The Moormen are, both physically and mentally, a fine race. They are commonly called by the nickname *Káká*, or crows, by other natives, and Tambies by the Europeans. As they are very energetic and enterprising, a large part of the trade of the country is in their hands, the majority of them being shopkeepers, jewellers, masons, and pedlars. Their distinguishing features are their shaven heads and curious hats. These last are of two kinds—one made of coloured plait, brimless, and shaped like a huge thimble, and the other a white cloth skull-

cap, which seems to be glued to the bare brown head.

They do not shut up their wives and daughters as do other Mohammedans, but Moor women, when going through the streets, often cover their faces, especially the old and ugly. They can scarcely be said to be always dressed in white, as their garments are generally of a light brown tint, from dirt.

Love of ornament is common to all Eastern nations, but is less pronounced among the Singhalese than most others. The women wear gold and silver hairpins and necklaces, and little more in the way of jewellery, while many of their Tamil fellow-countrywomen wear nose-rings and toe-rings, in addition to anklets and bangles. A peculiarity of Moor women is that their ears are often loaded each with half a dozen silver filigree earrings. Native women often smear their faces with powdered turmeric, making them of a bright yellow colour, anything but pleasing to European eyes. Wealthy Tamil men and Moormen may often be seen with golden armlets above their elbows, containing charms to protect them from evil.

Native children of all races are charming little creatures, bronze-tinted, dark-eyed, and merry-faced. Fat babies, innocent of clothing except, perhaps, silver chains round their podgy waists, sprawl about in the sun everywhere, or are carried on the hip by

little sisters only two or three years older than themselves. The children seem to have few regular games, but amuse themselves by "pretending," as other little ones do all over the world. The girls begin to help their mothers in domestic work at a very tender age, and the boys are set to tend the buffaloes and cattle, and to watch in the fields almost as soon as they can toddle.

The vast majority of the people live in windowless, mud-walled huts, thatched with plaited coconut leaves or straw. Under their own Kings none but the nobles were allowed to live in tiled or whitewashed houses. Each hut is usually embowered in a little garden containing a few coconut-trees, clumps of broad-leaved plantain and sugar-cane, with a few coffee-bushes, papáyas, custard-apples, pineapples, and other fruit-trees and plants scattered about. Many have pumpkin vines growing over the roofs.

The principal food of the people consists of rice, grown by themselves in the fields adjoining their villages. It is always partaken of in conjunction with curries of various sorts, and all hot. Of meat they eat little, but in the districts near the sea fish is largely consumed. Milk is not much drunk, principally because of the small quantity given by the native cows, which are not much larger than English calves, two quarts a day being considered a good yield. Much of the milk is converted into curds,

or into ghee, or clarified butter, for cooking purposes. Fruit and vegetables form a large part of the food of the people. For condiments and relishes they have chillies, turmeric, tamarinds, and other pungent fruits and roots; also *ka-avâdu*, or dried fish, a malodorous and unwholesome comestible, of which they are very fond. It is said by some scientists to be a cause of leprosy. Jaggery, or palm-sugar, is eaten in large quantities by old and young.

CHAPTER IV

THE PEOPLE (*continued*)

About two-thirds of the natives of Ceylon are Buddhists, about one-third are Hindus, and about one-sixteenth are Mohammedans. The Buddhists are all Singhalese, the Hindus are all Tamils, and the Mohammedans are all Moormen and Malays. Many Singhalese, though they call themselves Buddhists, worship Hindu gods in the *déwálas*, or temples, and Mohammedanism makes converts among all races, but a Tamil Buddhist is practically unknown.

Christians and Buddhists regard human life from a very different standpoint. The former consider it to be a gift from God to be spent in the best possible way, chiefly in unselfishly helping their fellow-men. The latter hold that existence is an unhappy state, which it behoves a wise man to terminate as soon as possible. This, however, cannot be brought about simply by suicide.

Buddhists believe that all living things have souls, which, on the death of their bodies, pass into other bodies. The soul of a King might occupy the carcass of an elephant in his next life, the delicate form of a woman in the third, then the diminutive body of a beetle, and so on. It depends entirely on the deeds, meritorious or otherwise, done in each life whether

the next will be a good or a bad one—a step upwards or downwards. They do not recognize the existence of God, or of sin as an offence against God, or of heaven—that is, any place of everlasting bliss. All that they hope for, after passing through countless good lives, and becoming saints and demi-gods, is to enter Nirvána—that is, to become extinct.

Buddhists, when worshipping at their *wiháras*, repeat what may be called prayers, though they are not addressed to any divine being, and do not ask for forgiveness, or grace, or guidance, or protection. They are merely praises of the Great Teacher and pious formulas, the repetition of which, in some spiritually automatic way, confers merit on the worshipper, and helps to bring about good re-births.

A well-known missionary Bishop once asked a Buddhist, who had been worshipping, to whom he had been praying. "To no one," replied the man. "I suppose you were praying for something?" continued the Bishop. "No, I was not asking for anything," was the reply. "What!" cried the Bishop, "praying to nobody for nothing!"

One of the most stringent tenets of Buddhism is the prohibition against taking life in any form. A strict Buddhist will not kill even poisonous snakes or noxious insects infesting his house and person, for the sufficient reason that they might contain souls which had once been housed in human bodies.

Singhalese fishermen salve their consciences by the quibble that they do not kill fish ; they merely take them out of the water !

To the vast majority of Buddhists, Buddhism is not so much a religion as a code of morals, which no doubt influences their lives to some extent. When, however, evil befalls them, it is not to Buddhism they turn, for there is no comfort to be got from its teachings. They go and make offerings at their *dēwālas*, or engage the services of devil-dancers to propitiate the demons, which they believe have malevolently brought misfortune on them.

The Tamils of Ceylon and the immigrant Tamil coolies from Southern India who work on the tea-estates are nearly all worshippers of Hindu gods. There are said to be many millions of these "gods" in the Hindu Pantheon, but in practice worship is confined, in different localities, to particular gods and goddesses. In Ceylon the most popular god is Síva the Destroyer, in whose honour many temples have been built. It is the custom for men, women, and children, after making offerings in a temple, to mark with consecrated ashes their foreheads, breasts, and the upper part of their arms with the symbol of the god whom they have been worshipping.

The Moormen and Malays of Ceylon, though Mohammedans, have combined with veneration for the Korán and the teachings of Mohammed many of

the superstitious practices of their heathen neighbours. There are a few *mullahs*, or priests, learned in Arabic and the Law, but as a body the Mohammedans of Ceylon are grossly ignorant, and at the same time bitterly intolerant. There are mosques at all the towns and villages where they congregate. Parties of them may be seen sometimes squatting in circles, all bowing together and shouting simultaneously "Allah!" (Oh, God!) at quick intervals, as an act of worship.

The different races in Ceylon live together in perfect amity except in the matter of religion, but hostility shows itself only during the processions which the Buddhists, Hindus, Mohammedans, and Roman Catholics frequently make through the streets. These festivals often culminate in riots, and are always a source of anxiety to the authorities.

CHAPTER V

THE PEOPLE (*continued*)

It is a strange fact that, though the sacredness of life is so strenuously insisted on in the Buddhist religion, there are about five times as many murders committed annually in the Singhalese districts of Ceylon as in Great Britain, in proportion to population.

Most of these murders are committed during family quarrels regarding the possession of land. The drinking of fermented palm-sap and of the spirit distilled from it, has been the cause of many homicides, though drunkenness is far less prevalent than in Europe. Gambling is practised a good deal, sometimes ending in knife-fights.

A marked feature of the Singhalese character is their love of litigation. They will go to law about any trifle—in one recorded case the dispute was about the two thousand five hundred and twentieth part of ten coconut-trees! They are also very prone to perjury and to the fabrication of false cases. Dreadful revelations have been made of the lengths to which malevolent men have gone in their desire for revenge.

The Tamils are, on the whole, a more law-abiding race, and are not often guilty of crimes of violence. They have often figured, however, in cases of forgery, embezzlement, and kindred crimes, and are not a whit better than the Singhalese in the matter of perjury and false cases. The Moormen give the courts little trouble.

Charges are often made by cultured Europeans as to the supposed dishonesty, untruthfulness, and uncleanness of the natives, but it is scarcely fair that these should be judged by the high standards of such detractors. It may be safely asserted that the peasantry of Ceylon compare very favourably in

every respect with the working classes in Western countries.

Natives are often said to be cruel, but it must be remembered that Eastern and Western ideas of cruelty are very different. Should a bull fall down a bank and injure itself so that it cannot rise, a European would at once put it out of its pain, but a Singhalese would be shocked by such a proceeding. He would build a shelter over the paralyzed beast, and supply it with food and water till it died, after days of agony, and consider that he had won merit by his kindness!

Bullocks may often be seen in Ceylon branded in a way which would not be tolerated for one moment in England, elaborate patterns having been burnt all over them with hot irons. In most cases this is done in the belief that it is the cure for rheumatic or other ailments from which the animals were suffering. The natives of Ceylon are not more cruel or callous than, for instance, Italian or Spanish peasants, who, if remonstrated with for cruelly beating their mules or other beasts, would exclaim in surprise: "What would you?—they are unbaptized things!"

As regards the charge of laziness brought against the natives, it is true enough that they have a proverb which says, "It is better to walk than to run, to sit down than to walk, and, best of all, to go to sleep!" Some allowance should, however, be made for the

A CHILD BRIDE.

climate and soil of the country, which make the strenuous life unnecessary for people with so few wants.

One very good trait of the natives is their kindness to their old folk and their love of their children.

The character of the people may be judged of to some extent by their proverbs. Here are a few current in Ceylon:

"Though the well be deep, it is only up to the neck of the frog."

"What matters it that the cat is made of clay, if it catches mice?"

"The tongue is safe, though in the midst of thirty teeth."

"The sandalwood-tree perfumes the axe that fells it."

"Like asking the thief's mother about the things lost."

CHAPTER VI

THE PEOPLE (*continued*)

CASTE feeling is not so strong in Ceylon as in India, yet it affects very considerably the relations of the natives with each other. There is little or no intermarriage or partaking of food together between the higher and lower castes. The Singhalese have no

hereditary priest-caste, like the Brahmins; but, in common with many races in the East, they give pre-eminence to the agricultural caste, after which they place the trading castes, with the fishermen, barbers, washermen, potters, weavers, coconut-climbers, and tom-tom beaters low down in the scale. There are also communities of out-castes, with whom other natives will have no intercourse. They were not allowed in old days to cover the upper part of their bodies, as a sign of their degradation.

The caste system among the Tamils is very similar to that of Southern India. Caste is not recognized among the Mohammedans.

There is a tendency outside the towns for the different races and castes to herd together. Many villages in the interior consist only of Moormen, or of Veddahs, or of out-castes. Railways have done more to break down the barriers of caste than all the efforts of the missionaries; the unwillingness of natives to come into contact with members of lower castes than their own being more than counterbalanced by the desire to travel cheaply.

There are no unhappy widows, doomed to a life of drudgery and abuse, as in Northern India; infanticide is not practised; and the birth of female children is not considered a calamity, as in many other countries. All births must now be registered, but many of the old people do not know their ages. An

aged Tamil man, on being asked how old he was, pointed to a full-grown palmyra palm standing near, and said, "That is my *tambi*" (younger brother), meaning that it had been planted soon after his birth, he having no other means of knowing his age.

All native girls in Ceylon are married at an early age, but child-marriages, in which the little bridegrooms and brides return to their own homes after the ceremony, are only practised among the wealthier classes of the Tamils. There is no courting, as understood among the white races, before marriage, and no honeymoon after it. In place of a ring as the symbol of marriage, a golden ornament is hung round the neck of the bride. Much money is wasted at the marriage ceremony, but the members of the family help by lending things needed. The bride is often literally weighed down with jewellery borrowed for the occasion from her female relatives. Among the Singhalese there are two kinds of marriage—the *díga* and the *bína*—in one of which the bride goes to her husband's house in the usual way, and in the other the husband becomes a member of his wife's family.

It is customary among all Eastern people to raise a great outcry as soon as the breath has left the body of a sick relative. The wailing is kept up for a considerable time, mostly by the women, and is a most weird, depressing performance. Both burial and cremation are practised in Ceylon by the Singhalese

and Tamils, but the Moormen never burn their dead. In the Eastern Province sections of old dug-out canoes are often used by them as coffins. The cremation of a Buddhist high-priest is always a great festival, and thousands flock to witness it. In the jungle districts it is usual to pile stones and thorns over the shallow graves, in order to prevent jackals and other wild beasts from digging up the bodies.

The chief innocent amusements of the Singhalese, especially of the women and children, are attendance at the temples on festival days, and at the readings by the priests of "birth-stories" in the preaching-sheds in the villages, and pilgrimages to sacred places. In addition to these religious dissipations, the Tamils often get up *nâdagams*, or open-air plays, which last for days together. Moormen are sober, money-making people, who seldom give themselves up to enjoyment in public. No day of rest corresponding to the Sabbath is observed by any of the native non-Christian races in Ceylon, but they all have numerous festivals, of which they avail themselves fully.

Native ideas of good manners are very different from those of Europeans. It is considered grossly disrespectful for a Tamil or a Moorman to come into the presence of a superior with his head or the upper part of his body uncovered, or with his sandals on his feet, or to speak with his mouth full of *betel*, or masticatory. Singhalese, when wishing to show

respect to great men or priests, put the palms of their hands together and raise them to their faces in the attitude of worshipping, crouching low at the same time.

There is no word nor phrase in either Singhalese or Tamil exactly equivalent to the English "Thank you." The recipient of any gift or attention merely remarks in acknowledgment that it is good, and that he is pleased. Europeans often hurt the feelings of natives unintentionally by the use of phrases not familar to them. An officer of Government deeply offended a head-man whom he wished to commend for his energy in carrying out some order by saying that he "had worked like a horse."

CHAPTER VII

COLOMBO

Colombo, the chief town of Ceylon, on its western side, has been described as the "Halfway House of the East." Its position and its great artificial harbour, one square mile in extent, makes it a convenient place of call for vessels trading with India, the Far East, and Australia. It is no uncommon sight to see half a dozen magnificent mail-steamers at anchor

together, with twenty or thirty cargo-steamers discharging machinery and goods from Europe and taking in tea and other products of the island; also sailing-vessels, of strange shape and rig, from all parts of the East.

If Colombo is approached in the north-east monsoon, the pure azure of the placid sea, the long lines of graceful palms along the shore, and the distant mountains, dominated by Adam's Peak, are sure to deeply impress the traveller, even though he is unable to detect "the spicy breezes" which "blow soft from Ceylon's isle." If, however, the south-west monsoon happens to be breaking, the scene will be very different—a sky covered by inky clouds, heaving agate waves, ridden by countless "white horses," and millions of palm-trees tossing their long leaves wildly. The mile-long breakwater will be covered with acres of foam, and geysers of white water shooting a hundred feet high. Within its sheltering arms, however, all is at rest, and a landing can be effected whatever the state of the weather.

"The Fort" is the name still given to a neck of land lying to the south of the harbour, where, till about forty years ago, stood a great fort built by the Dutch. Here may now be found the Government offices, the hotels, the offices of merchants, and large European shops. Apart from the brown people swarming everywhere, there is nothing Oriental in

the appearance of this part of the town. On landing, visitors are always assailed by sellers of curios, such as figures of elephants in ebony, models of native canoes, and coconut-wood walking-sticks. Moor gem-dealers are also a great nuisance, and are often glad to accept one rupee for a "sapphire" for which they had asked five hundred!

To the south of the Fort stretches a fine esplanade called Galle Face, where many of the Colombo residents drive and walk in the evening.

A stranger to the island would, no doubt, make without delay for the Pettah, or native quarter of the city. He will find it thronged with brown folk, not only petticoated and combed Singhalese, shaven-headed Tamils, and white-capped Moormen, but turbaned men from Central India, Parsis, in semi-European costume, Arab horse-dealers, Afghan cloth-sellers, and other representatives of the East.

From the numerous godowns, or warehouses, come the acrid odour of leaf tobacco, the sour smell of *pûnac*, or coconut waste, and other evil emanations. In their dark interiors squat *chettis*, the usurious money-lenders of the island, scratching their accounts on strips of palm-leaves. The streets are lined with small native shops, called *boutiques*—a word derived from the Portuguese. Here are sold everything natives require—bright prints for clothing, coarse crockery, pottery, rice, pungent curry stuffs,

fruits, and vegetables. Some of these last look strange enough to European eyes, such as enormous *jaks*, the largest edible fruit in the world, sometimes weighing fifty pounds; also *rambûtans*, a pink fruit covered with soft spines; gruesome masses of sticky tamarind fruit, "drumsticks" for curry, and egg-fruits. One pound sterling would be sufficient to buy up the entire stock-in-trade in some of these tiny shops.

Here may be seen a small apartment, reeking with filth, in which an old woman dispenses *hoppers*, or hot rice-cakes. Over the doorway hangs a board on which is roughly inscribed "Dining Hall"! On the opposite side of the street is a tiny den, in which a barber squats, shaving the head of a customer. This establishment has the sign, boldly displayed, "Hair-dressing Saloon"! Not far off the following legend appears over a door: "Best Fortune-telling Place."

There are many curious vehicles in the streets, chiefly great two-wheeled *bandies*, or bullock carts, with immense coconut-leaf hoods, and drawn by pairs of bullocks, on whose sinewy necks rest heavy wooden yokes. These are used for the transport of goods, and often carry a ton and a half of tea, rice, or coconut fibre. The cries of the drivers, "*Mak!*" "*Pitta!*" (Right! Left!), to their bullocks are very familiar sounds, and are sometimes supposed by Europeans to be "Mark," "Peter"—the names of the beasts! Small

spidery-looking hackeries, or light carts, drawn by a single bull, and carrying not more than two passengers, rattle about. The bullocks are of a smaller breed than those yoked to bandies, and are high-spirited, shapely little creatures. Many of them can trot as fast as horses, and hackery races are a favourite pastime of the Singhalese. Tail-twisting and prods with sharp-pointed sticks are the methods of driving used. Scores of 'rikshas, imported from Japan, ply for hire, and are much used by residents and visitors.

There is a palm-bordered fresh-water lake, four hundred and sixteen acres in extent, in the centre of Colombo, in the not over-clean waters of which hundreds of natives bathe daily, scores of bullocks are washed, and lines of dhobies, or washermen, ply their trade.

The method of washing clothes employed by these last seems to strangers very rough and ready, to say the least. It consists in folding the article to be washed into a sort of flexible truncheon, and beating it on a flat stone, with an occasional dip in the water. An essential part of the process seems to be the grunt emitted by the dhobie with every swinging blow. No soap is used, yet the clothes are washed snowy white, but suffer in texture severely. Dhobies are anathema to English residents, not only on account of the damage they do, but because they are more than suspected of often hiring out the pretty dresses

and drill coats and trousers of their clients to natives aping European dress and customs at weddings and other festivities.

In the centre of the lake is Slave Island, which is now connected with the rest of the town by causeways. In old days the Dutch, being apprehensive of risings among their slaves, used to take them every evening in boats to the island, where they were kept confined till the morning.

The residences of the Europeans are chiefly to be found in the Cinnamon Gardens, where, however, little cinnamon now grows. On arrival at this part of the city, no stranger can fail to be struck with the brilliant colours of everything; the red roads, and the intense green of the coconuts, plantains, and other unfamiliar vegetation, contrasting strongly with the bright dresses of the natives.

There are many fine houses in large compounds or gardens, full of coconut, mango, jak, breadfruit and other trees. Of these, the jak is perhaps the most remarkable. When young, it bears fruit on its branches; when past maturity, on its trunk; and in its old age, from its roots. The blazing red and yellow flowers of leafless flame-trees, the gorgeous purple of bougainvillea creepers, and the peculiar yellow-green leaves of lettuce-trees are to be seen everywhere. In uncultivated marshy spots pitcher-plants grow luxuriantly.

CHAPTER VIII

COLOMBO (*continued*)

The crows are a remarkable feature of Colombo life. They live in thousands in the banyan and other trees on the outskirts of the town, and make their appearance in the streets every morning soon after daybreak. Here they fly about all day or perch in rows on the roofs and coconut-trees, cawing clamorously, or hop about with heads awry and beady eyes askance. They are the scavengers of the city, but do not confine their activities to the disposal of offal. Nothing eatable, or which glitters and is portable, can be safely left unguarded. Many ladies have had to deplore the loss of valuable trinkets left exposed on dressing-tables before open windows. Crows are credited with a sense of humour, and often do whimsical things. They have been seen carrying round stones in their bills to the ridges of tiled houses, and dropping them there, for the fun of seeing them roll down the roof!

New-comers to the East are always on the look-out for snakes, but these, as a matter of fact, are seldom seen, except, perhaps, harmless rat-snakes. There are a number of poisonous snakes, such as cobras, *tic-polongas*, green *polongas*, *karavillas*, small banded snakes, and others.

Cobras are spoken of by natives as the "good snakes," and they have curious ideas about them. One is that they are always found in pairs, and that, if one is killed, its mate is sure to be seen soon after seeking revenge, and another is that every time a cobra expends its venom it looses a joint of its tail. The Singhalese are very averse to killing cobras, and will sometimes permit them to live in a hollow tree near their houses without molestation. Sometimes fear of the creature will induce a man to catch one in a trap, when he will place it alive in a basket and set it afloat on a river, to the imminent peril of anyone who may take it up!

Natives believe in the existence of a snake called the *mápilla*, which lives in the roofs of houses, but which is never seen. It seems to have a particularly malignant disposition, for it is said to often bite people without the least provocation. Seeing a man lying asleep, a *mápilla* will call together two or three of its relatives, one of which takes a turn with its tail round a rafter, and hangs over the sleeping man. The others then form a sort of snake-rope, and the last to descend will bite their victim and then coil upwards, followed by the others, and all retreat to their hiding-places. Thus it is, say the natives, that so many die of snake-bites who never see the reptiles which bit them!

Scorpions are not often seen, but centipedes are

common enough. The bites of both are very painful, but seldom cause death, except in the case of young children. Lizards are to be seen everywhere, green creatures with scarlet heads and frills, of formidable appearance, but harmless ; also little house-lizards, which dart about the walls, catching flies in the most familiar fashion.

The teeming insect-life to be everywhere seen very soon impresses one unfamiliar with the tropics. Black ants, some of which bite most painfully, cross the road in armies ; red ants swarm in the trees, making leaf-houses for themselves ; carpenter-bees are busy drilling tunnels into any soft, dry wood they can find ; mason-wasps build their curious little mud nurseries against the walls of houses ; scavenger-beetles work on the road, rolling to their burrows balls of ordure, many times bigger than themselves, in which to lay their eggs ; praying mantises perch on the bushes in devotional attitudes, while they tear their insect-victims limb from limb ; leaf-insects crawl about, pretending to be dead leaves, also grey moths, which look like bits of lichen-covered bark. The air is filled with flights of butterflies, mostly saffron-hued, all making their way, according to native ideas, to Sri Páda, the sacred mountain.

At night the weird cries of jackals, which haunt the neighbourhood of inhabited places, begin to be heard. The flying-foxes appear, and flit about

silently, or frequent the mango-groves, where they do great destruction to the fruit, fighting and squealing the while. So noisy and quarrelsome are they sometimes that the natives account for it by saying that they are all intoxicated through drinking the fermented toddy in the pots hanging in the coconut-trees! Sometimes the hideous cry of the devil-bird, a species of owl, may be heard. The trees are ablaze with the flickering light of myriads of fire-flies, and the whir of the cicáda beetle and the hum of clouds of mosquitoes over stagnant pools may be distinctly heard.

CHAPTER IX

ROADSIDE SCENES

As their dark, windowless little huts are only suitable to sleep in, or to take shelter in when it rains, the greater part of the time of natives is spent in the open air. Consequently, many curious sights are to be seen in the streets.

The whole process of preparing the midday meal, the boiling of the rice, the slicing of the vegetables, the scraping of the coconut and the grinding of the curry stuff may be seen from beginning to end. The food is often partaken of, first by the

men, and then by the women and children, under a tree. Fingers are always used to convey the rice and curry to the mouth, and plantain leaves are often employed instead of metal dishes or plates. Natives, however, do not like to be overlooked while they are eating.

When not engaged in domestic duties, the women sit before their houses weaving mats, twisting coir yarn, or making lace, an art they have practised in the Galle district since Portuguese times.

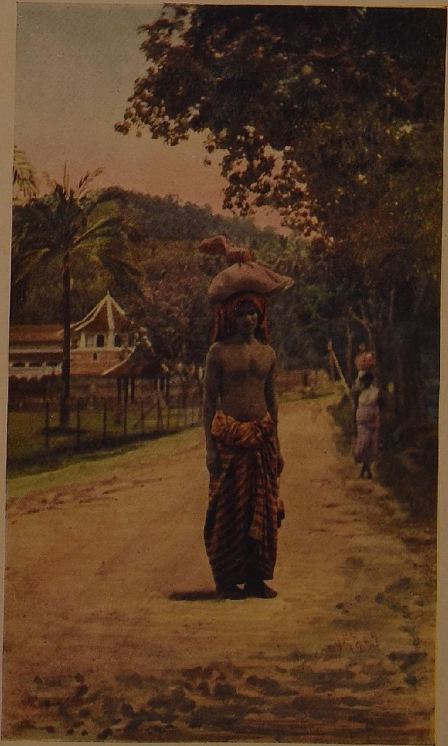
Glimpses may sometimes be got of a devil ceremony going on at the back of some house, for the benefit of some sick person. A *kapurâla*, or exorciser, clad in a fantastic costume, stands on a low stool, and shaking an iron trident with loose rings on it over the patient, pours out a string of charms, the meaning of which he does not understand. They are fragments of ancient exorcisms in a dead language, handed down verbally from generation to generation.

Children and pariah dogs swarm everywhere. Most of the latter are practically masterless, and live on what they can pick up. They became so numerous that Government determined to reduce their numbers, and offered rewards for their destruction. In the first year in which this was done in one of the larger towns eleven hundred dogs were shot in a few days!

In little booths open to the street native craftsmen may be seen at work, such as carpenters making

furniture of yellow jak-wood, or repairing hackeries. Two of them may often be seen working one plane, one pushing and the other pulling the tool, this being necessary owing to the extreme hardness of some of the woods worked. Ebony-carvers, tortoiseshell-workers, and makers of porcupine-quill boxes squat at their work open to the view of all. Sometimes a silversmith is to be seen sitting at his little bench before the door of a house, fashioning bangles and other ornaments with the same kind of tools as were employed two thousand years ago. The natives have a proverb which says, "There is no monkey but is mischievous, no woman but is a tattler, and no silversmith but is a thief!" A sharp lookout is accordingly kept, lest the silversmith should substitute base metal for the rupees given to him to be made into jewellery.

At the *gálas*, or cart halting-places, the strange process of shoeing bullocks may often be witnessed. The animals are thrown down, their four legs are tied together, and light iron shoes nailed on to their cloven hoofs. Without this protection their hoofs would soon be worn to the quick by the hard work of dragging heavy carts. The feeding of cart-bullocks with *púnac*, or coconut refuse, is another strange sight. The cake is broken up and dissolved in a small tub, into which the carter dips a sort of bamboo bottle, and, forcing open the bullock's mouth



A ROADSIDE SCENE NEAR THE TEMPLE OF THE TOOTH.

and holding its head high, pours the evil-smelling stuff down its throat.

The streets are full of men and women, whose appearance and doings are full of interest to those not familiar with Eastern life. Men pass continually, carrying *pingoes*, or elastic shoulder-poles, at the ends of which hang loads of fish, fruit, or other commodities. The bending of the *pingo* at each step and swing of the laden man greatly facilitates the carrying of heavy burdens. Combed and petticoated *appús*, or Singhalese servants, and Tamil "boys" in white clothes and turbans, go in and out of the *boutiques* buying provisions for their masters' households.

In front of a *boutique* may often be seen a yellow-robed Buddhist priest, bowl in hand, waiting for a dole for his monastery from the shopkeeper. He stands with eyes cast down and an impassive look on his face. His shaven head makes his ears look unnaturally large. If the *boutique*-keeper puts a handful of rice, or a few plantains, or other gift into his bowl, he moves away in silence, and without any acknowledgment of the donor's gift or reverence.

Wandering monkey-tamers and snake-charmers often give their performances in the street. The fangs of the cobras handled by the latter are always drawn, and they are harmless. The snake-charmers, however, frequently pretend to have been bitten, and to cure themselves by the use of snake-stones, gener-

ally bits of charred bone, which they sell to the credulous.

There is much noise but little quarrelling in the bazaars, and the native policemen, in their blue serge tunics and trousers and red forage-caps, have little trouble in keeping order.

CHAPTER X

THE PALM GROVES

THE road from Colombo to Galle, the once famous harbour of Ceylon, is one of the most beautiful in the world. It is simply an avenue, over seventy miles long, of coconut-trees, through which peeps may be had of picturesque red headlands and of white waves breaking over coral reefs.

The coconut is one of the most beautiful, as well as the most useful, of the palm tribe. It grows best in sandy soil near the sea, and, indeed, is often found flourishing with its roots actually washed by the salt waves. The natives believe that it will not grow beyond the sound of the human voice: it is certainly never found growing wild in the forest. The stems are always crooked, but not ungracefully, a fact noted in the native proverb which says: "Whoever has seen a dead monkey, a white crow, and a straight coconut-tree will live for ever!"

The Palm Groves

The palms along the Galle road form dense groves, as they are planted closely together—more for the sake of the sap they yield, to be distilled into a potent spirit called arrack, than for the nuts they bear. A class of people called toddy-drawers, regarded as of very low caste, collect the sap. They climb the palms by means of loops, into which they slip their feet, and grip the stems with their toes, while they lever themselves up with their arms. On reaching the top, they empty the sap which has collected in the little pots attached to the spathes of the trees into vessels which hang at their sides, and then pass on to neighbouring trees by means of ropes which bind them together. Accidents often happen through the breaking of these ropes, resulting in a fall of thirty or forty feet. It is not an uncommon practice for malevolent men to secretly cut the tree-ropes of their enemies half through, so as to cause them to give way when used.

There are many fishing villages in the palm-shadowed bays along the coast, with numerous Singhalese sailing-canoes drawn up on the beach. *Orúwas*, as they are called, are among the most remarkable sailing-vessels in the world. Each is made of a single log, hollowed out, with a superstructure of planks, and is so narrow that it cannot float upright of itself, so has to be provided with a long outrigger, with a float at the end to balance it.

Its great cotton sail, supported by two bamboo masts, drives it at great speed over the waves. When the wind is strong, a man crawls out on the outrigger to keep it down with his weight. More than one man may be required to prevent the float from being lifted out of the water by the wind-pressure, and the fishermen speak of degrees of bad weather as a "one—two—or three-man gale."

Most of the fishermen are Roman Catholics, but they are nevertheless grossly superstitious. They leave their valuable nets unprotected on the beach, knowing that not even their most deadly enemies will cut them up, from fear that their own luck would depart from them for ever if they did so. The hangman's rope is in great demand among the fishermen, being unravelled and the strands twisted into the meshes of their nets for luck.

There are many Roman Catholic churches along the road, some very picturesque. The interiors are generally very gloomy, with roughly carved and coarsely painted figures of the Madonna and saints, and tawdry hangings and ornaments. Dust collected from the floor of a church and mixed with water is considered an excellent medicine for any complaint.

Galle is a beautiful old town, and was a place of much importance in bygone days, but its trade has departed since the Colombo harbour was constructed. An ancient Dutch fort, on a rocky promontory,

SINGHALESE SAILING CANOE. *Page 41.*

guards the entrance to the lovely harbour. At the north end is a pretty palm-covered islet, on which is a Buddhist temple.

The palm groves stretch along the southern coast for some thirty miles, as far as the town of Tangala, where the bush-country, which covers a great part of the south-eastern part of the island, commences. The coast scenery up to this point, including Dondra Head, is the finest to be found in Ceylon. Inland, large tracts of land are covered with citronella grass, from which quantities of essential oil are extracted and exported.

Hambantota, a small town some twenty miles to the east, has the driest climate in Ceylon. Here broad *lèwayas*, or salt-pans, stretch along the coast, where hundreds of tons of salt are collected every dry season by Government, the sale of it being a monopoly.

CHAPTER XI

THE GEM LANDS

North of Tangala is a populous country full of villages, coconut and other estates, and paddy-fields. It is a good deal cut up by rivers and streams, over the smaller of which numerous *êtandas*, or narrow foot-bridges, made of palm-stems and bamboos, have

been constructed by the villagers. Many of them are very picturesque, but are difficult for Europeans to cross. At one time the forests contained numbers of calamander-trees, yielding an exceedingly beautiful and valuable wood for cabinet-work, but so great was the demand that there are now scarcely any left.

The talipot, the giant of the palm tribe, may often be seen on the outskirts of the villages. It flowers only once, when it reaches maturity, and then dies. The flower is a mighty plume of cream-coloured, wheat-like blossom, twenty feet high, and visible from a great distance.

Areca-palms grow in perfection in this part of the island. Their long, straight, slender stems and feathery crowns have caused them to be described by native poets as "Rama's arrows," with which the god-hero assailed Rávana, the demon-king of the island, in his mountain fastness. The nuts of this tree, together with lime and pepper leaves, are used in "betel-chewing," a habit almost universal amongst natives, but which Europeans regard as disgusting. It stains the saliva a deep red, and persons indulging in the habit frequently expectorate what looks like blood. The *kittûl* is another palm found here in abundance. Quantities of arrack are distilled from its sap, and it yields a very useful kind of fibre.

The damp forests here are also the home of numerous orchids, one beautiful variety of which—

the *Dendrobium McCarthyii*—is now protected by law, as it was in danger of being exterminated by collectors.

This part of the country is inhabited mainly by Singhalese, almost all of whom are Buddhists. Every village has its little *wihára*, or temple, with miniature whitewashed *dágoba*, and its *pánsala*, or priest's house, where boy-novices learn to write the characters of the sacred language, Páli, on sand-boards. In the larger villages sheds built of poles and palm-leaves, and gaily decorated with coloured cloths, are to be found, in which the priests at certain seasons read *bana*, "the Word," to the assembled people. On such occasions a consecrated cord is held by assistant-priests round the reader and the sacred books, with its ends in water, in order to keep off devils—it is, in fact, a sort of spiritual lightning conductor!

Devil-dancing is much practised in this part of the country, the object generally being to free some village or house of sickness or supposed witchcraft. The masks and dresses worn by the dancers are truly satanic in their ugliness, and their performances weird and nerve-shaking.

A curious kind of competition called "horn-pulling" is often got up between neighbouring villages in this district. Ropes are fastened to the tines of a strong deer's antler, and a tug-of-war takes place between teams chosen by each village. When the

antler snaps, the team to whose rope the larger piece is attached has the right to roundly abuse their rivals, who must bear it in silence.

Land-leeches, repulsive creatures, an inch or two long and of the thickness of a knitting-needle, swarm on all the paths and fasten on wayfarers. They are a perfect curse, and natives when afoot carry little bags of salt moistened with tobacco or lime juice, with which they touch the noxious creatures when they feel them attach themselves to their feet, whereupon they wriggle and drop off at once.

Ratnapura, the "City of Gems," a small town at the foot of Adam's Peak, is the centre of the gemming industry. A jewel-fair is held there annually at the Buddhist festival of the Perahera. There are numerous gem-pits in the neighbourhood, from which are obtained many rubies, sapphires, emeralds, moonstones, cinnamon-stones, cat's-eyes, and other precious stones. The smaller ones are roughly cut by native lapidaries, who may often be seen at work turning an emery-wheel with one hand and pressing the gem against it with the other. There is an active trade in spurious gems, many of which are sold to passengers from Australia and the Far East passing through Colombo.

Ceylon produces the finest quality of plumbago, and some thousands of tons are exported every year.

Few of the mines are of any depth, and the methods and appliances employed are not up to date. The plumbago mining district is generally looked upon as a sort of Alsatia, where native rascaldom congregates. The crude mineral is transported to Colombo, where it is cleaned, sorted, and packed for export.

One curious fact in connection with the plumbago trade is that no tiles can be placed on the sheds in which it is prepared for export. The plumbago-dust settles between the tiles and lubricates them, so that they all slide off at the slightest jar or vibration. The sheds are consequently always thatched with *cadjans*, or plaited palm-leaves.

CHAPTER XII

THE HILLS

THE railway from Colombo to the tea-districts is one of the most beautiful in the world. For about forty miles it runs through level, cultivated country full of villages buried in palm-groves and coconut and cocoa estates. During the monsoon rains the country is flooded for miles owing to the rising of the rivers. From a station called Rambukana the line begins to ascend, and winds its way through beautiful valleys, wild gorges and long tunnels, and along the rocky

faces of precipices, till it reaches an elevation of six thousand two hundred feet, or over a mile, and then descends to about four thousand feet.

The scenery is magnificent all the way, views being obtained, at every turn of the winding track, of mountains soaring far above, such as Alagala, from the summit of which the last tyrant-King of Kandy was accustomed to hurl his victims, the Bible Rock, the Duke's Nose, and other peaks ; of great waterfalls flowing out of upland forests into cultivated valleys, and of shining rivers and silvery streams. Panoramic views also constantly open out of the low country far below—a mighty stretch of forests and palms and terraced paddy-fields, patched with dark cloud-shadows, away to the sea-line.

On clear nights the flash from the lighthouse at Colombo may often be seen from the hills. A story is told of a tea-planter who noticed one evening that the light, fifty miles or more away, did not begin to flash till half an hour after the proper time, though the delay had not been detected on the spot !

Owing to the great sweep the railway takes through the vast amphitheatre of the Uva Hills after passing through the Summit Tunnel, a passenger waiting at the terminus—Bandarawela—for the down train can see it coming an hour and twenty minutes before it arrives !

The first town of any importance reached by the

railway is Kandy, one of the show-places of the world. It is seventeen hundred and sixty feet above sea-level, and lies in a lovely little valley, the bottom of which was converted by the last native King into a charming lake. There is an islet in the middle of it, on which, it is said, the King used to maroon any of his numerous wives who angered him, till they had seen the error of their ways!

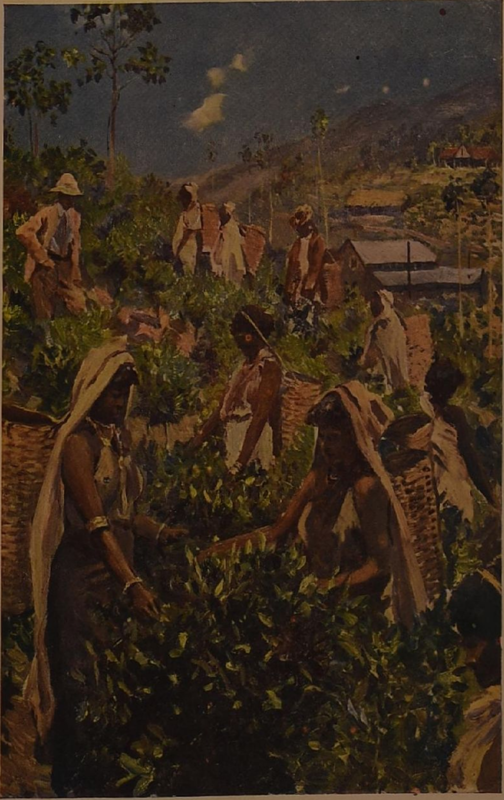
The most interesting building in Kandy is the Dálada Máligáwa, or Temple of the Sacred Tooth, a prominent picturesque pile close to the lake. It contains the oldest historical relic in the world—the Dālada, the reputed right canine tooth of Buddha, who lived over two thousand five hundred and thirty years ago. As it is about two and a half inches long, it is not unreasonable to have doubts as to whether it was ever fixed in any human head! Yet it is venerated and practically worshipped by many millions of Buddhists. It is kept in a jewelled casket of great value, and is rarely exhibited. Once a year it is carried in procession round the town.

This is during the Perahera, a festival which is held in August. The Sacred Tooth is placed in a sort of bell-shaped howdah, on a magnificent tusker elephant, almost hidden by gold embroidered trappings, and a great canopy is held over it by a number of men. Kandian chiefs, in their curious costumes

and on foot, form a sort of guard of honour. A dozen or more caparisoned elephants, ridden by the lay head-men of the temple, follow with stately step, and bands of native musicians and troops of male dancers come between each. The procession is always at night, and the great elephants, the thousands of wildly excited spectators, the din of the tom-toms and wind instruments, the mad antics of the dancers, and the glare of the torches, combine to make a picture not to be forgotten. The priests themselves take no part in the proceedings.

There are several Buddhist colleges in Kandy, and yellow-robed, shaven-headed priests are an everyday sight. They belong to different orders, indicated by their dress, one party wearing their robes over both shoulders, another covering only one shoulder; some carrying huge fanlike shields, others shaving off their eyebrows as well as their hair and beards, and showing other peculiarities. All, however, take vows, and are allowed to possess only their robes, a fan, a water-strainer, and one or two other articles. They lead a lazy life, and may return to lay life at any time.

The sight of a Ratamáhatmeya, or Kandian chief, in his official dress is an impressive one. Portliness being considered throughout the East as very desirable in a man of rank and position, a chief, if Nature has not been kind to him in this respect, calls in Art



A TEA ESTATE. *Page 55.*

to his aid. He winds some thirty or forty yards of fine gold-threaded muslin round his waist till the desired presence is obtained. All this weight of loin-cloth is supported by a broad gold-embroidered belt, into which a short jewel-hilted sword of honour is thrust. A brightly coloured silk jacket with gigot sleeves covers the upper part of his body, and on his head he wears a curious pincushion hat. Round his neck are gold chains, with huge medals attached to them, given to his ancestors by former Governors, and on his fingers are heavy rings with huge rough-cut gems.

Four miles from Kandy, enclosed by a bend of the Mahâveli Ganga, the largest river in Ceylon, are the beautiful Peradeniya Botanic Gardens, where specimens of tropical and subtropical vegetation from all parts of the world are to be found. On the banks of the river are some clumps of giant bamboos, the stems of which are so big that sections of them can be used as buckets.

In the centre of the tea-districts is Newera Eliya, the well-known sanatorium. It is a beautiful table-land, six thousand two hundred feet above the sea, and consequently cool, and even frosty at night. Pedrotalagala, the highest mountain in Ceylon, eight thousand two hundred and ninety-six feet, rises over it, wooded to the summit. The swamps at the

bottom of the valley were converted, some thirty years ago, into a pretty lake. Red-roofed bungalows peep out of wooded gardens, occupied chiefly by people from Colombo, who have escaped for a few weeks from the enervating heat of the low-country. One of the finest golf-links in the East has beer laid out here.

On the eastern side of the mountain ranges are the Uva *Patnas*, which are great undulating downs about four thousand feet above sea-level. The climate here is quite different from the great tableland above. The latter, in the south-west monsoon, may be deluged in rain while the *patnas* below are bathed in sunshine. The wind on these downs is very violent at certain seasons, sufficient sometimes to overturn carts.

It was on these breezy, healthy downs that the great camp was formed in which many hundreds of Boers were kept prisoners during and after the South African War.

A pretty little town called Badulla, the centre of an important tea-district, lies in a valley to the east of the *patnas*, about two thousand feet above the sea. It is dominated by a striking mountain peak called Námanakúli. Other small towns, the centres of planting districts, are Mátale, Gampola, and Náwalapitiya.

In all the valleys are small Singhalese villages,

surrounded by terraced paddy-fields. There are also a few hamlets, inhabited by a despised class called Rodiyas, a word which means simply "filth." The legend regarding them is that they were doomed by a King of Kandy to be for ever out-castes because one of their number, who was purveyor of meat to the palace, had caused human flesh to be served at the royal table in revenge for a slight offered to him.

CHAPTER XIII

THE TEA-DISTRICTS

Some sixty or seventy years ago the highlands of Ceylon were covered with an almost unbroken sheet of forest. This has been gradually cleared away, till now the only forest remaining lies along the crests of the hills, which has been preserved for climatic reasons.

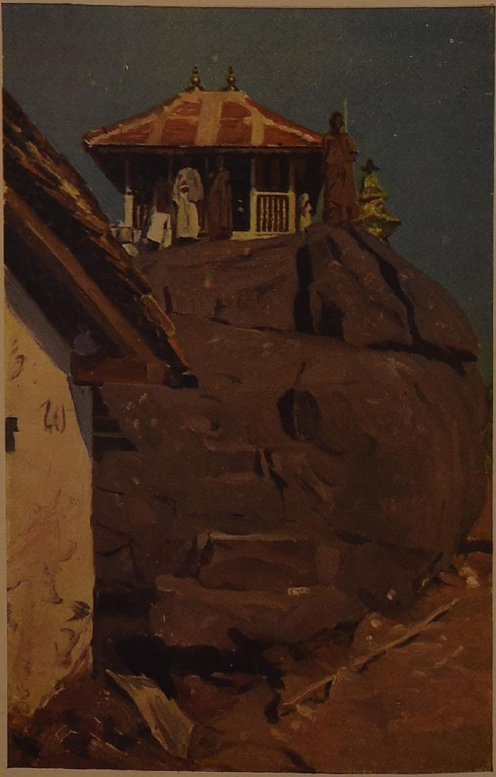
For many years coffee was the staple product of the hills, but the ravages of leaf-disease destroyed it, and now scarcely any coffee-bushes remain, except the semi-wild ones near native huts. The hillsides are now covered with tea-estates, varying in size from a few score to many hundreds of acres in extent. The railway passes through the heart of the

hills, first-class roads give access to the different districts, most of which have mellifluous native names, and many hospitals, churches, and schools have been built.

Several hundred British planters superintend the cultivation and manufacture of tea, and lead a pleasant life in the health-giving hills. They are hard-working men, yet find time to get a good deal of amusement in the form of tennis, cricket, football, golf, and other field-sports.

Every estate is intersected with well-laid-out riding roads, and is covered with a network of drains. Near the main road, and in a position convenient for the application of water-power, stands the factory where the tea is manufactured. Above it, on some sheltered knoll, is the superintendent's bungalow. In the hollows, near the streams trickling down the hillsides, are the different coolie-lines, where the estate labourers live. Groves and belts of fuel trees diversify the scene.

The tea-bushes are pruned down so as not to exceed four feet in height, for convenience of plucking. Only the tender leaf-shoots are used in the manufacture of tea, and it depends on the proportion of particular leaflets used in each make of tea whether it will be graded as "Pekoe," "Pekoe Souchong," etc. Plucking is carried on only when the tea-bushes are "flushing"—that is, budding



ADAM'S PEAK. *Page 59.*

freely, in consequence of bright sunshine following copious showers, or other cause.

After the green leaf has been plucked, principally by the coolie women and children, it is scarcely touched by the human hand. It is withered with the aid of great revolving fans, and then rolled, dried, and sifted, and undergoes other processes, till it leaves the factory in large lead-lined boxes, graded ready for shipment. The machinery employed is very up-to-date, and is the outcome of years of experience and experiment.

Above four thousand feet tea only is grown, and it is superior in quality to that grown at lower elevations. Many other products flourish on the lower slopes of the hills, such as rubber, cocoa, cinchona, cardamoms, etc.

During the last few years many thousands of acres have been planted with indiarubber-trees, and it is probable that before long Ceylon will be the greatest producer of plantation rubber in the world. Incisions are made in the outer bark of the trees, and the sap thus caused to flow is collected, and treated in various ways till it is converted into the marketable form of "biscuits," large, flat, semi-transparent cakes.

Not far short of half a million coolies are employed on the tea and other estates, and the vast majority of them are immigrant Tamils from South India. Many of them have now settled permanently

in the country, having found it an El Dorádo. They are nearly all Hindus, but are very lax in their religious observances, though many estates have tiny *swámi*-houses, or temples, where offerings to demons are made.

There is work for all on a tea-estate, the men doing the road-making, draining, pruning, and other heavy jobs, and the women and children the plucking and the weeding.

A curious sight, often to be seen when all the women on an estate are called out to pluck a heavy "flush," is the tree-nursery, to the branches of which a dozen or more brown babies are slung in cloths, watched by a tiny girl, while the mothers work.

The coolie women have a comical way of washing their babies. The mother squats on the ground with her legs stretched out, and the baby lying between them. In that position the little brown thing is gently kneaded and rubbed, has water poured over it, and, when dry, is sometimes oiled from head to foot.

CHAPTER XIV

ADAM'S PEAK

THE best known, but not the loftiest, mountain in Ceylon is Adam's Peak. It stands in solitary grandeur, seven thousand two hundred and sixty feet high, on the western edge of the great central plateau, and is visible to voyagers approaching Ceylon miles out at sea.

It has been a place of pilgrimage for a score of centuries to the devout of many races and several creeds. On its summit is a great boulder, on the top of which is a depression, about four feet long, which, with the aid of chisel and mortar, has been made to resemble roughly a gigantic human footprint. The Singhalese, Siamese, Burmese, and Tibetans claim it to be that of Buddha, the Great Teacher, and call it the Sri Páda. All the Hindu races of India assert it to be that of Síva, the god who, in the form of the divine hero Ráma, invaded Ceylon to recover his abducted wife Síta from the demon-king. The Mohammedans proclaim it to be that of Adam, who, they say, after being driven out of Paradise, stood on one foot on the Peak for centuries by way of penance! There are even so-called Christians who believe it to be that of St. Thomas, who is reported to have visited the Indies. Consequently, there is a never-

ending stream of pilgrims from all parts of the East to this famous shrine.

There are two ways of ascending the Peak. One, and by far the more laborious, is straight up from the low-country. The path is a mere narrow track, worn by millions of feet in past centuries, through dense forest, up torrent-beds, and along the edges of precipices. The last few hundred feet are so precipitous that chains have been fixed in many places for safety, and panting pilgrims, pausing to take breath, may see the clouds drifting beneath them. Should a weary pilgrim ask people descending the mountain how far it is to the summit, he will not be told the actual distance, but that it is "the trouble" of so many miles!

The other way is from Hatton, a little hill-town through which the railway passes. A good road, some fourteen miles in length, leads nearly to the foot of the sugar-loaf Peak, passing through what, fifty years ago, was a vast forest called "The Wilderness of the Peak."

There are legends connected with every stream, ravine, and rock in the pilgrim-path. A long straight crack in a great flat-topped rock is said to have been made by Buddha with the point of his needle, as he sat mending his robes, as an indication to some demons who showed themselves that they were not to approach any nearer!

A tiny chapel has been built over the sacred footprint. It belongs to the Buddhists, who appropriate all the offerings, whether made by worshippers of their own faith or Hindus or Mohammedans. The pilgrims usually come up in family parties, and on arrival make the circuit of the shrine, chanting their prayers and shouting "Sadhu!" an expression of joy. As they pass the bell which hangs near the door, every man, woman and child strikes it, in order to draw the attention of the guardian spirits. They then make their offerings, which usually consist of flowers and money.

A strange phenomenon may often be observed from the summit on a clear, cloudless morning. As soon as the sun rises, a blue transparent pyramidal shape is visible on the sky to the west. It is the shadow of the Peak, thrown on the thin mist rising from the low-country. This gradually sinks as the sun rises, and disappears in about twelve minutes. Soon after the shadow appears again, clearly defined on the country below, and before long it will be noticed that there are two shadows, that of the cone-shaped Peak overlying the shadow of the whole mountain range.

CHAPTER XV

THE PARK COUNTRY

On the eastern side of Ceylon, stretching from the hills to the sea, is a forest tract called the Park Country, on account of its numerous open glades and grassy plains.

Here are to be found the Veddahs, the few descendants remaining of the ancient aborigines, and doomed to extinction before many years. Before British protection was extended to them they were harried and harassed by their Singhalese and Tamil neighbours, and so betook themselves to the recesses of the forests, living in caves and hollow trees, on game obtained by their bows and arrows, and dogs. As they can no longer be bullied and cheated with impunity, they have become less timid. Being acknowledged by all natives to be of good caste, they have married freely with the two races living on the outskirts of their forests, so that no more than a few score remain of pure blood. Their ancient history, even the name they bore as a nation, has been forgotten, and only a few words of their ancient language remain in use.

Much nonsense has been written about the Veddahs: that they wear no clothes, never laugh, and are unable to count more than ten! Faked

photographs have been published of them, dressed in leaf-aprons, donned for the purpose, and dancing ridiculous dances.

Though within the memory of men still living most Veddahs lived in caves, wore little or no clothing, used bows and arrows, obtained fire by rubbing sticks together, and made bags from the bark of trees, they do none of these things now, and there is little to distinguish them from jungle Singhalese or Tamils.

In former years they used the foot-bow, a formidable weapon, which could only be drawn by the hunter grasping it with the toes of one foot as he lay on his back, and pulling the bowstring with one or both arms.

Veddahs are not particular about their food, and will eat monkeys, lizards, and the big fruit-eating bats, but, strangely enough, will not touch beef, an abstention which has no doubt been handed down through the centuries from the time their cow-reverencing ancestors came from India to settle in the island. At the present time they have practically no religion except a belief in demons, supposed to infest certain rocks, pools, and trees in the forest, to whom they make propitiatory offerings.

Honey is one of their chief articles of food, and to obtain it they descend precipices by means of ropes made of canes and jungle creepers, to secure the huge

combs made by the rock bees. This is always done at night.

In this part of the country there are a number of hot springs. The water in one of them is of very high temperature, and the jungle people have a story that an elephant once fell in, and was boiled!

White-ant hills, sometimes nine or ten feet in height, are to be found everywhere. Snakes often take up their abode in their passages and chambers.

Herds of spotted deer, the most graceful wild creature in the East, roam the grassy plains of the Park Country. Many kinds of birds are to be seen in the glades. Gaudy-plumaged peacocks and brightly coloured jungle cocks, followed by their dowdy-looking hens, strut about; hornbills, with enormous double casques, fly heavily from tree to tree; flocks of noisy parakeets wing their way over the tree-tops; colonies of weaver-birds are busy building their strange hanging nests, and tailor-birds work assiduously, sewing together their little leaf-nests; golden orioles, orange-coloured woodpeckers, turquoise and pied kingfishers, crested hoopoes and long-tailed "cotton thieves" flit about over the pools, or where food is plentiful, in the shape of flying white ants and other insects. There are few songsters among them.

CHAPTER XVI

THE EAST COAST

ALONG the east coast stretch a number of shallow lagoons, some of which dry up during the hot season and become salt-encrusted plains. The largest of them is over thirty miles in length, and during the north-east monsoon becomes a fresh-water lake.

On an island in this lagoon is Batticaloa, the principal town on this side of the island, and inhabited entirely by Tamils and Moormen. It is very picturesquely situated, and boasts of a small fort, built by the Dutch two hundred years ago.

The lagoon teems with fish, and several curious methods of catching them are followed by the different fisher castes. Some employ long nets, into which they drive the fish by beating the sides of their canoes with sticks, producing a sonorous sound, audible for a great distance. Others use large dip-nets, into which fish are tempted by bait. Casting-nets are made much use of where the water is only a foot or two deep, and are thrown with great skill, the leaded fringe always falling on the surface in a wide circle. In the mangrove swamps, where rivers debouch into the lagoon and the water runs deep, men may be seen, perched on stands, shooting fish with bows and arrows.

At night dug-out canoes are paddled noiselessly about, with cressets of fire flaring over the bows, and fish, attracted and dazzled by the glare, are speared as they rise to the surface. Scores of men wade about in the shallows, each with a flaming torch in one hand, and a cone-shaped basket, open at both ends, in the other. On seeing a fish by the flare, the man claps his fishing-basket over it, and then, putting his hand in at the top, secures his prize.

One peculiarity of the lagoon is the "singing fish," to be heard chorusing on any still moonlight night. It is not known what fish or fishes produce the sounds heard, but the natives believe the "singers" to be a species of shellfish! Two sounds may be distinctly heard—one like the twanging of a harp, and the other like the croaking of a frog, neither very musical.

There are other curious fish in this district, such as the "climbing perch," little creatures a few inches long, which come out of the sea and move about among the rocks by means of their fins. They are popularly supposed to travel across country, and even to climb trees!

Several kinds of fish in Ceylon seem to have the power of burying themselves in the mud of pools when these dry up in the hot season, and of coming to life again, so to speak, when the rains begin some months later.

There are a large number of coconut estates along the coast, mostly owned by Europeans. Elephants are commonly used for the estate work, and may be seen drawing huge-wheeled carts laden with coconuts, bags of *copra* or piles of *cadjans*.

A weird ceremony called "fire-walking" is performed in this district every year, in connection with a great heathen festival. A number of devotees walk one after another through a trench full of glowing red-hot embers, and are afterwards soundly castigated with long whips. The natives say that the men are never the worse for the ordeal!

Seventy miles north of Batticaloa is the world-famous harbour of Trincomalee. It is land-locked, with a narrow entrance, and its beauty is enhanced by several wooded islands. Two forts guard it, one—Fort Ostenburg—on a frowning cliff dominating the entrance, and the other—Fort Frederick—on a rocky promontory jutting into the sea on its eastern side. Immense sums were spent in strengthening these forts, but, a few years ago, they were practically dismantled and the garrison withdrawn.

On the summit of the cliff overhanging the sea at Fort Frederick is a stone monument with an inscription in Dutch on it, recording the fate which befell Francina Van Reede, daughter of the Commandant, over two hundred years ago. Her lover, a Dutch

officer, whose period of foreign service had expired, repudiated his betrothment, and embarked for Europe, and the forsaken girl threw herself from the cliff as the ship bearing away the man she loved disappeared in the distance.

Many kinds of beautiful shells are fished from the sea in the neighbourhood of Trincomalee, and are sold by the Moor hawkers in neat native-made baskets. A large kind of oyster, yielding very fine mother-of-pearl, is found in the Tamblegam lagoon, near the little town.

About five miles from Trincomalee is a village where there is a hot spring in which little fish may be seen swimming about!

CHAPTER XVII

THE BURIED CITIES

It was little realized in the early days of British occupation that in the forest-covered plains in the centre of Ceylon there existed the majestic remains of several ancient cities, the oldest of which—Anuradhapura—was flourishing before Rome was founded. So submerged were they in the sea of trees, and so buried by leaf-mould, slowly formed through many centuries, and by the ceaseless action of millions of earthworms, which covered them with

their casts, that most of the buildings had entirely disappeared.

The great *dágobas* were so overgrown by trees as to seem only miniature cone-shaped hills, the beautiful *pókúnas*, or bathing-places, constructed of cut stone, had become entirely filled up, and only the capitals of the lofty stone pillars supporting the long fallen-in roofs of palaces, temples, and monasteries remained above ground. Mighty inscribed monoliths, commemorating the deeds of ancient Kings, had been overthrown by the resistless force of growing tree-roots. Exquisite shrines of carven stone were in the grip of parasite banian roots, which flowed over them like huge green candle-gutterings.

Some thirty years ago the work of excavation was commenced by the British Government, and much of the ancient glory of these long-forgotten cities brought to light. The giant *dágobas*, containing the collar-bone, the nail-parings, and other relics of Buddha, were cleared of trees and brushwood, and the débris at their feet removed, revealing the ornamental stone bases, chapels, and steps; the great bathing-places were emptied of earth, and many interesting royal, religious, and public edifices opened up. Numerous beautiful examples of ancient architecture and stonework were uncovered, such as flights of steps, bas-reliefs, pillars, guard-stones, and threshold-stones, all richly carven, and in many

cases as sharp-cut as on the day they were placed in position, over two thousand years ago.

Some curious "stone canoes," twenty feet and more in length, were found, the use of which can only be conjectured. They have been variously supposed to have been the feeding-troughs of the King's elephants, or the receptacles for boiled rice, for distribution to the people on a vast scale, or vats for the dyeing of the yellow robes of priests.

Perhaps the most interesting thing at Anuradhapura is the Sacred Bo-Tree, the oldest historical tree in the world. It is said to have grown from a cutting from the Bo-Tree in Northern India, under which Buddha "attained Enlightenment," brought to the island by the royal priestess Sanghamitta in the year 288 B.C.

It grows on a large brick-built platform, with steps leading up to it, and there is nothing impressive about the dilapidated buildings which surround it. The tree itself is insignificant in size and appearance, and gives little indication of its venerable age. There can be no doubt, however, that it is the identical tree frequently mentioned in the ancient Singhalese chronicles, and that it has been an object of adoration to Buddhists for nearly two thousand two hundred years. Its fallen leaves are carried away in large numbers as relics.

Another buried city is Polannaruwa, situated about

forty miles to the south-east of Anaradhapura. It did not come into existence till about A.D. 769, and was the second of the ancient capitals of the country. Like the mother-city, it contains great *dágobas*, palaces, and temples, but none of such size and magnificence, though several are very beautiful. Near some rocks lies a gigantic recumbent figure of Buddha, forty-five feet long.

Not far from Polannaruwa is the famous rock-fortress Sigiriya, to many people more interesting than the buried cities. It is an immense cylindrical bare rock, rising some four hundred feet above the forest, and has a flat top about an acre in extent. Sheer precipices surround it on three sides, and it can be climbed, but with difficulty, on its eastern side only. Until a few years ago its summit was covered with trees. These were cleared away, and the ruins uncovered of the fortified palace, built about A.D. 477 by Kási'appa the Parricide, a tyrant King, who fled to this impregnable rock from his revolted people. A finely carved stone throne was found in what was probably the audience-chamber, also several large reservoirs, hewn out of the solid rock for the storage of rain-water. In a sort of rock gallery, through which the steep path to the summit passes, were found a number of large frescoes, which, though painted over one thousand four hundred years ago, are almost as fresh in colour as when first limned.

Some fifteen miles to the west of this rock-fortress is the celebrated Dambulla cave-temple, full of images of Buddha and of divine personages. The roof is covered with frescoes in crude colours.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE GREAT FOREST

Nine-tenths of the great forest which covers all the northern, central, and eastern parts of Ceylon consist of scrub, bush-country, and grassy plains, the result of the destructive method of cultivation called *chēna*, carried on by the jungle people.

They fell the trees, and, when dry, set fire to them, fence the clearing with their charred remains, and sow the ash-manured soil with millet, manioc, and vegetables of various sorts. Fresh blocks of forest are cleared every year, and thus, in the course of time, all the timber over vast areas has been destroyed. Almost the only high forest remaining is that surrounding ancient ruins, which is left untouched by the natives on account of the devils supposed to haunt such places.

Two of the most valuable cabinet woods known—ebony and satin-wood—are obtained from these forests. The former is merely the heart-wood, or core, of a large soft-wooded tree.

THE SACRED BO-TREE. *Page 70.*

The railway now runs through the northern part of this great forest, and it is intersected by main trunk roads. Many of the paths between the villages are, however, merely old game tracks, made chiefly by the water-loving elephants, which follow one another in Indian file along them night after night, going to and from their bathing and drinking places.

The ancient names of the towns and villages which once filled this now forest-clad country have in most cases been forgotten. The tiny hamlets at present occupied by a few thousand jungle people bear names derived mostly from trees and from hunting incidents, such as "Tamarind-tank," "Where-the-pig-was-burnt," and "The-pool-the-leopard-leaped."

The jungle people consist of Singhalese and Tamils and Veddah half-breeds, with a sprinkling of Moormen. They are a poverty-stricken people, and the more remote their villages are from towns and roads the more miserable is their condition. Much, however, has been done for them in recent years by the opening of roads, the repair of irrigation tanks, the digging of wells, and the clearing away of forest round their villages, letting in air and light. A horrible disease like leprosy, from which formerly the greater part of the jungle people suffered, has been almost stamped out.

Great tracts of forest, scores of square miles in extent, exist, quite uninhabited. The people living on the borders of these tracts are forced to wage unceasing war against wild animals. Elephants enter their fields and devour and trample down their paddy. Sámbur deer, wild pigs, and porcupines break into their forest clearings, and lay them waste, in spite of fires, beating of tom-toms, and shouts. The buffaloes and dwarf black cattle of the villagers have to be carefully guarded by day, and driven into stockaded byres at night, for fear of leopards. One of these fierce creatures has been known to kill in a few weeks all the cattle of a village.

The jungle people themselves are always in danger of being attacked by wild beasts. Elephants are, as a rule, harmless creatures, but occasionally a "rogue" appears, to meet which in thick forest is almost certain death. Bears are the most dreaded of all the forest denizens, as they are very fierce, and have a fearful habit of biting and clawing the faces of their victims. Men most dreadfully disfigured by these creatures may often be seen in the forest villages. Leopards, wild buffaloes, and wild boars, though they sometimes attack human beings, are little feared.

There are several kinds of monkeys in the forest. The great grey *wanderoos* and the little red *rilawás* are very numerous, and where they are not hunted for food are very tame. They do a good deal of mischief

in newly-opened coconut estates by stripping off and eating the blossom. On one occasion a flock of them, seeing a European baby left unguarded in the verandah of a house near the edge of the forest, descended from the trees, and so bit and maltreated it that it died. There is one strange monkey which is only seen at night. It is the *loris*, or sloth-monkey, and is exceedingly small, with enormous eyes and long, slender limbs. The natives have a superstitious fear of it, and believe that to keep a tame one in the house will bring ill-luck.

Other creatures to be found in the forest are the crocodiles, from monsters over twenty feet from snout to tail-tip to babies only a few inches in length, just out of the shell, infesting every lagoon, tank, river, and pool; great rock-pythons, sometimes reaching seven yards in length, which crush deer and pigs to death and swallow them whole; scaly ant-eaters, with wonderful flexible tongues, which roll themselves into balls when frightened; great spiders, with yellow glutinous webs, so strong that hats may be hung on them; also land tortoises and chameleons.

The jungle people have many curious and ridiculous ideas regarding wild animals. They believe that all old elephants, on feeling their end approaching, go off to a valley among the mountains which no human eyes have ever seen, and lie down to die on the shores of a lovely lake, surrounded by the bones and

skulls of thousands of their dead kind. The natives also believe that a crocodile has four eyes, and that its bite produces leprosy; also that each pack of jackals has a king, on whose head is a horn, and that whoever can secure one of these will be fortunate in everything he undertakes!

The north-eastern parts of the great forest are subject to droughts, no rain falling for months together. Many of the drinking-places dry up, and the wild animals suffer severely from thirst. The elephants march off in herds to distant tanks, the bears dig great pits in the sandy beds of dry rivers, the wild pigs haunt the village wells, and are often drowned by jumping into them; the deer sometimes go to the seashore and drink the salt water in their extremity, to die miserably afterwards; and crocodiles may be met crawling through the forest on their bandy legs in search of water.

The most northern part of the great forest is called the Vanni, and it is the driest, wildest, and least populated part of the island. In ancient days it was a sort of "no-man's-land," and was the battleground between the Tamils who had settled in the peninsula of Jaffna and the Singhalese.

CHAPTER XIX

THE JAFFNA PENINSULA

JAFFNA is a large town situated on a peninsula, which is separated from the mainland by a shallow lagoon, called Elephant Pass. A quaint little fort, built by the Dutch in the eighteenth century to guard against incursions of hostile Singhalese, stands at the head of the ford. Elephants attempting to cross the lagoon sometimes sink in the mud and perish. In the rainy season flamingos may be seen feeding in long lines, like regiments, also numbers of bag-billed pelicans and clouds of wild-duck and teal.

The most noticeable features of the peninsula are the red soil and the palmyras, one of the ugliest and at the same time one of the most useful of the palms. Its stem affords most durable timber, its leaves are used for a variety of purposes, its fruit is largely eaten, and from its sap is made arrack and coarse sugar, called jaggery.

What are called "married trees" may often be seen, being a palmyra palm growing out of the centre of a spreading banian-tree. Jaffna is famous for its luscious mangoes, and the coral-tree, with its red blossoms, is a common sight.

At certain seasons the whole country is covered with tobacco gardens, and the way the plants are

primitive sea-going craft in the world. They are simply rafts, generally made of five logs of soft wood, rigged with a picturesque peaked sail, fixed in a short forked mast. Forty or fifty years ago there was a regular catamaran mail-service between North Ceylon and South India.

CHAPTER XX

THE PEARL FISHERY

At what period pearls were first found and began to be used for personal adornment is not known to history. Certain it is, however, that pearls have been fished for off the north-west coast of Ceylon from time immemorial. The pearl banks lie twelve miles out at sea and under ten fathoms of water, and it is strange that no legend exists as to when or by whom they were discovered.

The reasons why pearl-oysters are to be found here in millions are obvious: the banks lie in a great sheltered bay, where the water is shallow, the currents are almost imperceptible, and the minute organisms on which the oysters live exist in abundance.

The Portuguese, Dutch, and British Governments have, each in turn, derived great revenues from the pearl fisheries. They are not held annually, but only after examination of the banks has shown that a large

number of mature oysters are ready to be fished. Sometimes, owing to the ravages of voracious skates which feed on the young oysters, or to the oyster-beds being covered with drifting sand or mud, and to other causes, no fisheries take place for years.

The fishing always commences about the middle of February, and lasts from six to eight weeks. At that time of the year the weather is generally most convenient for the operations. Soon after sunset a gentle land breeze springs up and blows all night, and by it the fishing fleet—consisting, it may be, of one hundred and fifty boats, each of about ten tons burden—sail out to the banks, and anchor at their stations. At sunrise the wind drops, and the divers begin work. They use heavy stones to take them down, and on reaching the bottom rake into bags attached to the ropes as many oysters as they can find, and then ascend to the surface.

The pearl banks are infested by sharks, but the divers do not fear them, as they all wear amulets purchased of professional shark-charmers, which they believe will protect them. What makes their work safe, however, is the presence of so many boats and the noise, which drive away the terrible creatures.

The diving is continued, with intervals for rest, till noon, when a sea-breeze springs up, which takes the laden boats back to land. On arrival, the oysters are all carried into the *kottus*, or stockaded enclosures,

and there counted, the divers taking away their share. The Government share is then put up to auction by the officer in charge of the fishery amid much excitement. Scores of traders attend from all parts of the East, and the bidding is often brisk. The price paid per thousand oysters depends on the reputed out turn of pearls; but at the best the whole business is a gamble, and much money is made and lost at it.

The contents of the oysters are emptied into dug-out canoes or tubs, and washed, and the pearls sifted out. The vast majority of them are seed-pearls of little value, but a good number of large ones, perfect in shape aud lustre, are obtained at every fishery. What may be called "freak-pearls," such as a large and a smaller one joined together, called by the natives a "cock-and-hen pearl," are much valued.

Other strange sea-products are to be found off the north-west coast of Ceylon. Among these are the dugongs, or sea-cows—warm-blooded creatures something like seals. Their habits of sometimes floating upright in the sea and of carrying their young under their flippers are supposed to have given rise to the belief in the existence of mermaids, held in the Middle Ages. They are called "sea-pigs" by the Tamils, who are very fond of their flesh. The Moormen are equally fond of it, but, being Mohammedans, are prohibited by their religion from eating "pig," as unclean meat. They have accordingly

given the creature another name, *ávariyá*, under which name they indulge their appetites with clear consciences!

Quantities of bêche-de-mer, or sea-slug, are collected in the shallows along the coast. They are dried and exported to China, where they are esteemed a delicacy, being chiefly eaten in the form of a thick glutinous soup.

Conch-shells are also fished for, but the demand for them is not very great. They are chiefly used for making the weird wind instruments used in heathen temples during worship.

Beds of growing coral may be seen at several places along the coast. Glowing with brilliant colours, they present a beautiful appearance through the clear, still water to anyone gazing over the gunwale of a boat gliding over them.

To the north of the pearl-banks lies the island of Manaar, about twenty-two miles long, covered with brushwood, interspersed with groves of grim black palmyras. Here and there may be seen ancient baobabs, or monkey-breadfruit trees, planted probably by Arab traders many generations ago. Some are over sixty feet in girth, though only thirty feet in height—veritable monstrosities of the vegetable kingdom.

The railway which is shortly to be made, connect-

ing Ceylon with India by way of Adam's Bridge, will pass through this island. When completed, it will probably be one of the engineering wonders of the world.

A large proportion of the people living at Manaar and along the north-west coast are Roman Catholics, their ancestors having been converted to that faith by Portuguese priests over three hundred years ago. Some thirty miles in the interior, in the heart of the forest, is a famous Roman Catholic place of pilgrimage, and another of equal sanctity stands on the shores of the great Putlam lagoon. To these crowds of natives flock at certain seasons—not only Roman Catholics, but Buddhists and Hindus, all of whom believe they will gain merit by the pilgrimage. Many go in anticipation of miraculous cures of diseases they suffer from.

CHAPTER XXI

ELEPHANTS

When Ceylon belonged to the Dutch, the capture of elephants for sale was one of their principal sources of revenue. The operations were carried out in the south of the island, where elephants then swarmed, over two hundred having been captured in a single

drive. The system is still followed, but not by Government, and the old Dutch name is still applied to it. Elephant kraals are now got up only by the Kandian chiefs, in honour of newly-appointed Governors, or of royal visitors to the island.

The system employed is to construct of tree-trunks strong enclosures, called kraals, into which herds of elephants are driven by hundreds of shouting men armed with spears, and provided with tom-toms and other noise-producing instruments. These men are sometimes engaged for weeks in the forest rounding up the elephants till all is ready for the final drive.

Stands are erected near the great gate of the kraal, and here ladies and gentlemen, invited to be present, sit for hours waiting, more or less patiently, while the herd is slowly and carefully brought up. When the great moment arrives, a tremendous uproar from guns, tom-toms, and human throats is raised, and the terrified elephants come crashing out of the forest, pause for one moment at the sight of the stockade, and then rush through the gate, a huddled mass of huge black forms ; the gate-bars are dropped behind them, and the pleasant, leisurely jungle-life is ended for most of them.

As soon as the herd is enclosed, tame elephants, carrying men expert at noosing, enter the kraal, and one by one all the young and saleable animals are

secured and dragged out. The aged and infirm elephants remaining are then allowed to escape.

The imprisoned elephants are generally too cowed to give any trouble, but occasionally an old bull, or more often a cow with a young calf, will show fight, and charge the stockade, and has to be shot to prevent it breaking through. It is a curious fact that the men riding the tame elephants inside the kraal during the noosing operations are never molested by the wild ones, though it would be easy for them to pull the men off and to trample them to death.

The training of the captured elephants is a simple matter. They are secured by ropes on fore and hind legs to strong trees, and are left to struggle till they have thoroughly exhausted themselves. Food and water are then offered to them, of which they will partake after a time. Day by day they get accustomed to the sight of human beings and to being fed and handled, and at the end of a few weeks are often tame enough to be untethered and led to water. A forest elephant, caught when full grown and tamed, is always more docile and safer than an elephant which has grown up from calfhood in captivity. Many elephants kill themselves through internal ruptures by the violence of their struggles after capture. They also suffer terribly from leg-sores caused by the chafing of the tether-ropes.

Elephants are also caught for sale by the Pannikkans, a class of Moormen living in the north-western and eastern parts of the great forest. Armed with noosed ropes of raw hide, they commence operations by creeping up to a herd and putting it to flight. Having selected their quarry, generally a half-grown animal, they follow hard after it on foot, and slip nooses on to its hind-legs as it runs, and then make fast the ropes to trees. It is a dangerous pursuit, and the method of capture is very injurious to the elephants caught, many of which die a few days afterwards.

In old days elephants were caught in pitfalls, or by being driven into swampy places from which they could not extricate themselves, but these methods are not now employed.

Not far from where the elephant kraals are held is the little town of Kurunégala, at the foot of a great bare rock. A large tank, or artificial lake, lies to the west of it, which a few years ago burst its embankment and flooded the bazaar, doing great damage.

To the west of Kurunégala, and on the sea-coast, is another small town, called Negombo. It has a small fort, built by the Dutch, also an immense banian-tree, one of the most wide-spreading in the island, growing on the esplanade. Several lagoons,

linked together by canals, lie between Negombo and Colombo, on which ply numerous quaint-looking *páda* boats, conveying produce to and from the many coconut estates in the neighbourhood.

Of the natural beauty of Ceylon as a whole there can be no question. Surrounded by a turquoise sea; encircled by palm-fringed shores and clothed with perennial foliage, from the white waves beating on its coral strand to the wooded summits of its many-peaked, deep-valleyed mountains; with its undulating emerald hill-downs, thunderous waterfalls and cascades, great plains covered with forest, broad gleaming tanks, silver-shining rivers, and placid lotus-covered lagoons, it presents scenes of loveliness almost justifying the words of the well-known hymn, which describes it as a land "where every prospect pleases."

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